

## take it easy by GhostGrantaire

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**Summary:**

A knock at the window had Steve jumping. He flew forward, hitting his arm hard against the steering wheel, his eyes wide and his heart pounding in anxiety. He glanced around wildly before his eyes landed on a young girl frowning at him through his window, her face twisted in its usual state of confusion and disapproval.

Steve rolled down the window quickly, his heart slowly regaining its normal pace. "Max?" He asked dumbly. "Are you okay?"

## **take it easy**

It was lunchtime at Hawkins High School, which meant Steve Harrington was feeling sorry for himself.

He hadn't chosen to do this, not really. He'd just sort of... ended up here.

After he and Nancy had officially broken up, Steve had been left with one terrible revelation: he didn't have any friends.

It was a sad truth, one that he'd come to grips with the Monday after everything had ended, standing in the bright white cafeteria and looking over crowds of people who wanted nothing to do with him.

Nancy and Jonathan wouldn't look at him without terrible expressions of guilt and shame overcoming their faces, something that made Steve feel physically ill. Billy wouldn't stop glaring daggers at him, even when he was talking to other people. At least he didn't talk to him anymore, but Tommy sure as hell hadn't gotten the message, always throwing out a new slur or insult that Steve just found pathetic. Carol had seemingly forgotten he even existed... not that he really wanted her to remember, anyway.

That was how most people seemed to think of him actually, that is to say, they didn't think of him at all. There were a few girls, mostly freshmen or sophomores, who didn't seem to understand how low he'd dropped, and would still take every opportunity to flirt with him. He supposed he could've eaten with them, but he didn't see the point. It wasn't like he wanted any of them, anyway, and if there was one thing he'd learned over the past couple weeks, it was that leading people on hurt more than anything.

So this had become his new routine— sitting his car with all the windows rolled up, blasting Journey until his heart hurt just a bit less. He wished he could smoke, but the smell of cigarettes never really left leather, and he didn't want to drive Dustin around in a car that could probably give him lung cancer.

Steve wasn't sure when he started basing his decisions off of the

health and safety of a few thirteen-year-olds, but he guessed it was nice to have some reason to stop sabotaging himself.

*"I'll be alright without you,"* Steve mumbled along with the radio, closing his eyes and letting his head fall back against the seat. *"There'll be someone else, I keep telling myself..."*

A knock at the window had Steve jumping. He flew forward, hitting his arm hard against the steering wheel, his eyes wide and his heart pounding in anxiety. He glanced around wildly before his eyes landed on a young girl frowning at him through his window, her face twisted in its usual state of confusion and disapproval.

Steve rolled down the window quickly, his heart slowly regaining its normal pace. "Max?" He asked dumbly. "Are you okay?"

Max paused before nodding, biting her lip. She glanced past him to the empty passenger seat. "Can I get in?"

Steve blinked, feeling anxious about this before nodding. She gave him a quick smile before walking to the other side. He leaned over and popped the door open for her and she quickly climbed in and closed it behind her.

"Is everything okay?" He asked slowly when Max stayed quiet. She sighed, pulling her legs up to sit criss-cross despite the lack of room. Her shoulders were tight and pulled up to her ears, her hair falling into her face.

"Yeah, I'm fine," she said shortly, giving a nod. Her eyebrows were furrowed like she was thinking, and Steve decided to wait for her to follow through.

Steve nodded slowly, turning back to stare out his windshield. For a moment, they watched the various high schoolers wander around the parking lot, each as lost and awkward as the last.

"I just—" Max started suddenly, and he looked at her quickly. Her face was red and she looked nervous as hell. Steve frowned, not liking how uncomfortable she seemed. "I wanted to say thanks."

Steve blinked, feeling very caught off-guard. He stared at her for a

moment, and his confusion must've shown on his face, because when she looked up her face changed.

"Billy," she said in lieu of an explanation. "For when you, you know. For that night."

Steve nodded slowly. "I didn't do much," he admitted. "He definitely won that fight."

Max closed her eyes like the words were painful for her. "I know. I know, and I'm... I'm really sorry about that. But still. You stood up to him. Nobody ever stands up to him."

She said that firmly, like there wasn't a hint of doubt in her mind. Steve suddenly got very worried about how many people Billy had terrorized over the years.

"But you did," she continued, and Steve raised his eyebrows.

"You did too," he pointed out. Max flushed, tensing up again and looking away from him. She seemed so on edge, it made Steve's heart hurt.

"He was going to kill you," she said quietly. "I couldn't let him do that."

Steve let a small smile cross over his lips. "I think I should be the one thanking you."

Max frowned, that same expression of frustration and guilt on her face. "No, you shouldn't. It- it was my fault he was there in the first place. He was going to kill Lucas, and then he was going to kill you, and if I hadn't been there, none of--"

"Max, hey," Steve cut in sharply. She stopped, looking at him with wide eyes, and she looked so damn young and upset in that moment. "What happened wasn't your fault. You saved me, okay? I save your ass, you save mine, yeah? That's it. End of story."

Max held his gaze for a moment, looking scared and nervous, but it slowly faded into a small expression of relief. Her shoulders dropped and she looked down at her lap. Her hair fell into her face, but Steve

spotted the hint of smile before it was blocked from view.

“I can teach you how to use that bat,” Steve offered. He wasn’t really sure what he was doing. All he knew was that this kid and her friends were about the only people who actually gave a shit about him right then, and he didn’t want to risk losing that. “Not that you were bad, you were awesome. But I can teach you how to really swing.”

Max looked over at him, smiling widely.

“Yeah?” Her voice was full of excitement, and he grinned back. After a second, her eyes flitted to the steering wheel. When she looked back at him, there was challenge in her eyes. “Can you teach me to drive, too?”

The smile fell off Steve’s face, replaced with a look of horror. “After that stunt you pulled in the Camaro? Hell no.”

Max glared at him. “I’m gonna drive whether you teach me or not. You might as well show me how to stay in a lane. Keep the roads a bit safer.”

Steve shook his head, laughing despite himself. These kids were complete shits, and he couldn’t help but admire the hell out of them. “I’ll think about it. Baseball first.”

Max shrugged, a smile playing on her lips like she knew she’d won. She unfolded her legs and propped them up, her dirty converse resting on his dashboard. After a second, she reached out and switched to the radio station, the heartbreaking sounds of Journey cutting off. Steve stayed quiet, letting her do what she wanted. She flipped through the stations quickly until she finally found something she liked. She grinned and leaned back, head bobbing with the sounds of the guitar.

Steve laughed as he clued into the song. “The Eagles? Really?”

“Shut up,” Max shot back before starting to sing along. Steve chuckled for a while longer, but when the second verse came on, he couldn’t help but join.

*“It’s a girl, my lord, in a flatbed Ford, slowing down to take a look at*

me,” they sang together, both rather off-key, but Steve didn’t mind. Max had relaxed, her feet tapping in perfect rhythm with the drums in the song.

Steve had never wanted a younger sister. He got the feeling, after Billy, Max had never wanted an older brother.

*Fuck it*, Steve thought decidedly as Max began playing the air guitar for the instrumental break. *Sometimes you get stuck with things you don’t ask for.*

He could get used to the Eagles. Journey was getting old anyway.

### **Author's Note:**

I'm trying to get back into writing slowly, since Season 2 really threw me off kilter. I love the dynamic between these two so much though.  
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